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JUSTICE GARMAN ANNOUNCES JUDICIAL APPOINTMENT

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rita Garman announced Wednesday the appointment of Jacksonville attorney Richard T. Mitchell as resident judge for Morgan County of the Seventh Judicial Circuit.

Mr. Mitchell's appointment was unanimously approved by the Supreme Court to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge J. David Bone. His appointment is effective September 3, 2002 and will expire December 6, 2004. Mr. Mitchell will be eligible to seek a full six-year term by running for election in 2004.

"Rich Mitchell has a proven record of service to the people of Morgan County," said Justice Garman. "His experience and dedication to the law, along with commitment to serving with fairness and compassion, make him an excellent choice for judicial service."

Justice Garman noted that Mr. Mitchell was the overriding choice of a special bi-partisan judicial evaluation committee which the justice appointed to aid her in the process of recommending a choice to the full Court.

"Rich Mitchell was the unanimous choice of those I entrusted to help me through this process," Justice Garman said. "When choosing a judge, it is important to select someone who not only has outstanding legal abilities and judicial temperament, but someone who meets the needs of the community."

"To evaluate the candidates and make a recommendation, I appointed a bi-partisan judicial evaluation committee made up of Morgan county residents and representing a diverse range of interests in the community. While all of the candidates for this position were excellent, the local bi-partisan evaluation committee clearly and unanimously identified Rich Mitchell as their recommendation."

Mr. Mitchell, 53, has practiced law in Morgan County for more than 25 years, and is currently a partner with the law firm of Thomas, Mitchell & McNeely. He has served since 1993 as a judge on the Illinois Court of Claims, which hears cases filed against the state.

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“I am honored to accept this appointment by the Supreme Court and I am eager to serve the people of Morgan County on the bench,” Mr. Mitchell said. “As Justice Garman has said many times, the cases in our judicial system belong to the people.

“Like Justice Garman on the Supreme Court, I will serve on the Circuit Court with a commitment to the belief that every case and every person, no matter who or what is involved, should be handled with fairness, impartiality and respect.”

Mr. Mitchell is a graduate of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and the John Marshall Law School in Chicago.

Justice Garman’s special committee which reviewed the candidates consisted of four non-lawyers and three attorneys.

The non-lawyer members were Dr. Lawrence Bryan, president of McMurray College; Dr. E.C. Bone, a Jacksonville physician; Jim Bruner, a Jacksonville businessman who served as chairperson of the committee; and Doris Hopper, retired dean from Illinois College.

The lawyers on the committee were Jacksonville attorneys, Harry Story, Daniel J. Beard and Eddie Carpenter.